



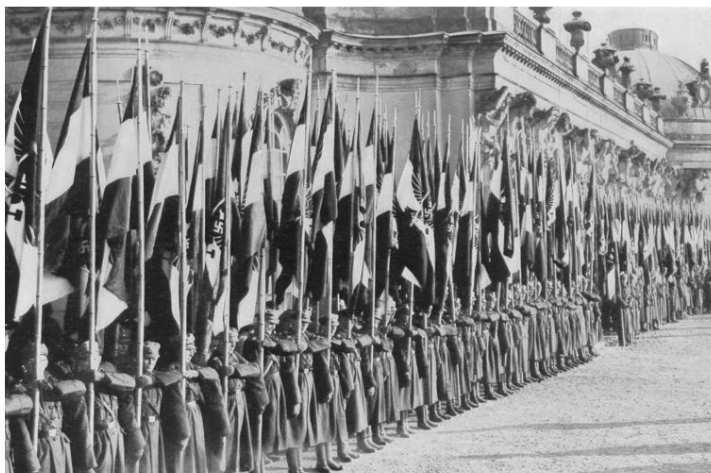
## Interview with Irma (Irmgard) Bauer, a girls' leader who served in the Nuremberg BDM during the war. Telephone interview, Nuremberg, 1997.

*Thank you for allowing me to speak to you, Ms. Bauer. I am interested in the history of the BDM and what it was like to be part of this organization. How did you come to the BDM and what impression did you have of the Hitler government?*

Irma: Oh dear, Brian, that's a lot you're asking me. Before I get into all of this, let me first tell you my story. I was born near Nuremberg in 1925 and remember very little about Hitler and the early rise of the Nazis. My family lived outside the city on a small farm where we sold milk and cheese. I helped my mother make cheese from an early age. I was one of 4 children; I had 2 brothers and an older sister. When I turned 10, I wanted to join the Jungmädelbund, but my mother said no. It cost money to buy the uniforms and it was a bad time to do so. It wasn't until I was 11 years old that I was allowed to join in 1936. I was in the Süd-Hochland local group of the BDM, which only consisted of girls from our district. I was very proud to be accepted as many of my school friends were already members. First, I would like to clarify something to you. We were not forced to join, there was no penalty or pressure if one chose not to be a member of the organization. Reading the newspapers and watching TV today, you might think that girls were harassed and threatened with violence if they refused. That's a crazy idea. Of course, in 1941, as the war grew, a War Act was passed requiring all youth to participate in the war effort by belonging to an organized Hitler Youth.



The necessity of the war made it a law that the youth had to help in any way they could. The war brought with it many laws that some found invasive and took away their freedoms. I would argue that in time of war every nation has such laws; Germany was not an anomaly because of Hitler. The laws were made like any other nation had to do to attract more people to victory. As for Hitler, I don't know what to say. He was our leader and the people agreed with him. I know



Consecration of the 342 flags of the Hitler Youth in Potsdam, February 24, 1934

Unfortunately nothing remains from the early days, except that my parents wanted him as a guide.

My father believed he would save Germany from the Reds. Immediately after the war there was an attempted coup in Munich and he was afraid that they would come to power.

The problem that would have arisen: they would have merged all the farms into one and they would have been made to supply the state without making much profit. My father knew Russian farmers who warned about the Reds.

They said they have taken over Russia and are killing anyone who doesn't cooperate with them.

Those who did so became poorer because they



Machines had to be given to those who could not afford them. In 1933 I was 8 years old and my parents were happy when it was announced that Hitler had become chancellor. In 1934 the tax laws changed and we had more money and more business. There was a lot of activity on our farm and I had to help out with my siblings. So you can say that the impression of Hitler was very good.

*What was life like at the BDM and what activities did you do?*

Irma: So, life in the BDM, what was it like? It was very new for me. It was an organization that I don't think has ever existed and probably won't exist in my lifetime. Where should I start? We had to meet twice a week, usually on Wednesday and Saturday. Most of our meetings were divided as follows. In the summer we were outdoors all the time. We chose activities like

Hiking, rowing, picking wildflowers and determining things in nature. Weather permitting, we could be seen cleaning up for those who may not have been able to do it themselves. Sometimes we were also asked to help others when they were in need. For example, a man delivering milk had lost his helper, so we agreed to take turns driving with him and helping him deliver. We also helped an elderly man who was a soldier in World War I clean up his street after a storm.

There was so much to do that he asked us for help.

We also held sales to help new girls pay for their uniforms. Since joining the BDM was a voluntary decision, there was no government subsidy for the uniforms, so you had to pay for them out of your own pocket.

My parents were party members, so they got a discount, and I got my winter uniform for free because my father gave cheese to the shopkeeper. In the winter we spent more time indoors doing crafts, learning to cook, sewing and sometimes political lessons. Many people found these lessons boring, but I was probably a special case because I enjoyed listening to the ideas. I wasn't a Nazi, but the idea seemed good and sensible to me at the time. We could also be selected to go to budget schools. Part of the BDM was to give girls a good future. They gave us strict morals. No smoking, no heavy drinking and modest behavior and clothing. It is ironic that today's television shows tell the story that we were forced to be sex slaves for the boys and the SS. The truth is that sexual activity was frowned upon unless you were in a relationship with someone.

The household schools taught all these things so that we would later be valuable women. The goal was to create girls who could support themselves and still be prepared for marriage and motherhood. They taught that girls can be anything they want, but also that all life comes from women and that it is our duty to our people and our Creator not to forget this. Many of them later became wives and mothers. There was another school called BDM-Werk Faith and Beauty, which taught all the qualities of an attractive, full-fledged woman who attracts a valuable man in order to marry him and have children with him. These were the prerequisites for a good life, and the BDM helped the girls



Feld- und Gartenarbeit verlangen eine zähe Arbeitsdauer



Werkarbeit und Freizeit sind Ausgleich für körperliche Arbeit



Diese Lager bedeuten bewußte Erziehung zur Gemeinschaft



Autn. (5): Hoffmann





to achieve this life. The HJ boys accompanied us to dances and parties when they were held. They were very decent and polite, accompanying us to the dance and then kissing our hands when we curtsied. So that's a little insight into the BDM era. It was a great place for a young girl and it is sad that we no longer have that as our girls are lost in the world today.

I still have to say something about what is being spread today and this situation makes me very angry. It is claimed that Nazi Germany had no compassion for the disabled and mentally ill. That's simply not the truth. So many people tell this recurring lie that young people think we went around feeling superior to everyone and taking the sick out of their homes and throwing them into camps. I find it very disturbing that the truth is not being told. We had special units for both boys and girls, which could also include deaf and blind members. I worked with a group of boys for a medical award that included blind people, and I accompanied them shopping around town. There were such organizations that were there for all disabled people to be part of our society. Guide dogs were developed in Germany for the blind. The deaf people had their own helpers and we learned sign language to communicate with them so they felt comfortable. It is said that the Empire was very cruel to anyone who didn't fit into society, as if we were Spartans bred just to fight. The truth is that I saw a society that wasn't like that. I saw people trained by the state to help anyone who couldn't cope on their own. There were social workers who lived with the disabled and sick to care for them when the family couldn't or didn't want to. I saw a woman driven mad by the death of her husband in World War I. She never recovered and the state paid for around-the-clock care for her. This is not the action of a system that devalues the sick and weak.



*Mother's Day May 11, 1941 in Berlin: To celebrate Mother's Day, there were individual ceremonies in Berlin at which around 3,000 Berlin mothers were awarded the Mother Cross of Honor. In the weapons hall at Köpenick Castle, the BDM girls delight the mothers with fresh flowers after the award ceremony.*

We went to the hospitals in our area and gave flowers, cards and hugs to the sick and desperate. Here in Nuremberg a woman suffered from an incurable illness



I went into her room to give her flowers and a card with good wishes. She asked me to sit with her and told me that she really appreciated us taking the time to meet her and wish her well. I

saw the tears in her eyes when she said she wouldn't live to see many more weeks, but she wished me a happy life and that I may be happy every day, no matter what life brings.

I always thought of her and prayed for her soul because she seemed such a kind person. You know, one thing we were taught was a strong sense of community to which we all belonged. We all helped each other, other people's problems became our problems that we had to solve together. Nobody should  
Going through this life alone and without support was a fundamental mission that we lived. Everything we did should be for the good of people, for the benefit of everyone in our community.

*Do you remember how you felt when war was declared?*

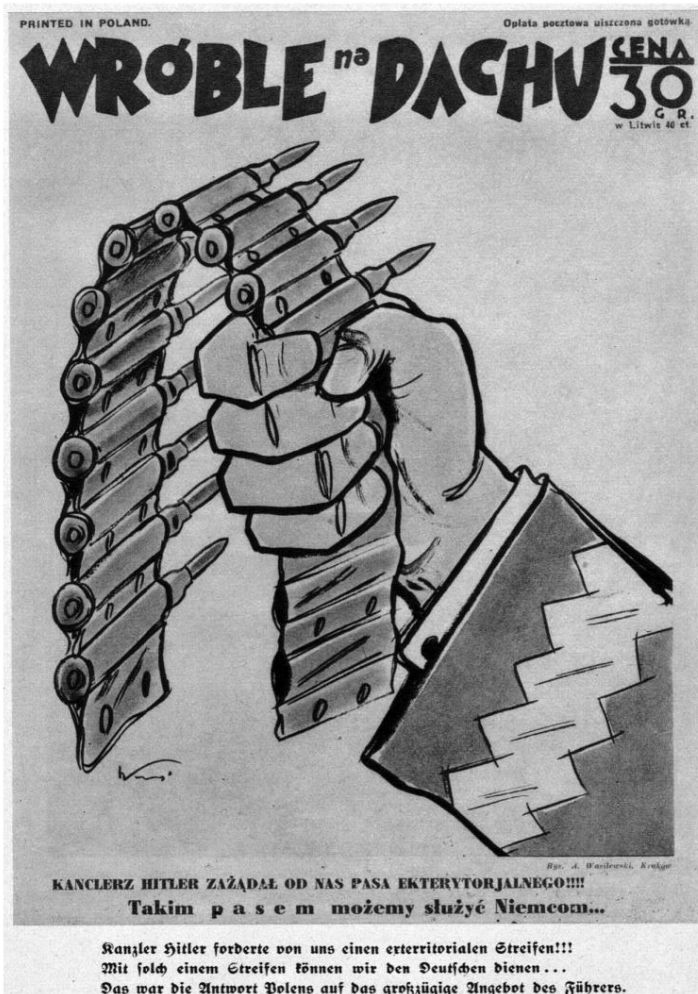
Irma: There are two aspects. The first was that we went to war with Poland, and I don't think that was a surprise to most people. There was always talk of problems with Poland in the newspapers. You may not understand this, but there was always

fighting on the border with Poland. These began during the first war and increased afterwards. There was a bad feeling and the Germans despised Poland for willingly accepting German territory and then demanding more. Hitler campaigned for the return of the former German territories; that was his declared political goal. The Poles were particularly incited by the English to reject all German efforts to return these territories. There was also a component that is not often talked about in today's climate: the former Germans who were forced to become Poles. They rebelled against this and revolted, which led the Poles to take harsh measures against them. In 1938 we had families in the city waiting to be resettled in the Reich. Our job was to get them treats and toys for the children.

I met a friend who came from a small German farm, so we had something in common. She told me that the Polish soldiers came and took many of her animals to give to Polish farmers. When they could no longer pay their bills, the soldiers came again and confiscated the farm. They drove them out and fled to Germany. It was sad to hear and the media is silent about it today. This is the reason why Hitler attacked Poland. They wanted to provoke a war for England because they thought it would give them more land. That was foolish, and now look at what their nation has become in the last 50 years: Slaves of the Reds. The real declaration of war that we feared was the declaration of war by Great Britain and France. The mood that day was somber. We feared that everything that had been built



*Children of German resettlers  
receive milk in the camp*







Postcard about the BDM's war effort

One thing I did was in 1942, I was 17 then and finished my time with the BDM. I was selected for the Eastern Service, where we traveled to the East with large groups of girls to help returning Germans resettle. Remember what I said about the Polish treatment of the Germans? Now, when the territories returned to Germany, the former residents were allowed to return with the blessing of the state.

They received their former land back and were compensated for all losses. We went to the east of Poland to help the returning farmers. There was often a lot that needed to be rebuilt. The boys helped with machines and the like and the girls helped with the care of the house or with the harvest. I was on a large farm with cows that was on the Russian border. This was a former German community that was depopulated first by the Poles and then by the Russians. I worked with dogs they brought with them to herd cows and sheep. It was a lot of fun and the weather was very nice in spring and summer. There was a river nearby and we often went down to swim and float after a hard day's work. We either slept in the camps we had built, or one night when a calf was born, we girls slept in the barn to watch. Other than that, the war didn't really impress me until the end, when it came home to us.

is now in danger. I don't think anyone believed they would take action against such justified actions in Poland. However, things eased as the victories arrived, and after France fell we thought we had emerged from the dark tunnel. However, our hopes for peace soon faded when the attack on Stalin came.

What was life like for you when the war started?  
Did you have a role during the war?

Irma: Not at first, of course we did. Cards were made for the soldiers and when a soldier was wounded or died in battle, we all made cards and drawings to send to the hospital or family members. We did food collections for the front and collected things that could be recycled for the war effort. I remember pulling a cart with tin cans and metal that I had collected from people through the old town and the castle.

We had to take them to a dumping point to send them to factories.



OSTEINSATZ IM BDM-EINSATZLAGER

HIRSCHDORF-KREIS-SCHRIEM

vom

9.6.-31.7.1942



Der Osten ruft

Damit der Osten für immer deutsch bleibt, soll ein Wall von deutschen Bauern die Ostgrenze sichern. Jungen und Mädchen, die Lust und Liebe zur Landarbeit haben, gehen für zwei Jahre zum Landdienst der HJ. Der Landdienst wird dieses Jahr vor allem im Osten eingesetzt. Er hilft den Rückwanderern und Neubauern. Manche Jungen und Mädchen wollen später Bauer und Bäuerin auf einem eigenen Hof im Osten werden. Der Landdienst schult sie für diese Aufgabe. Aber tüchtig und fleißig müssen die künftigen Neubauern sein; denn nur die Besten sollen im Osten bleiben.



*Were there ever any problems with the BDM or the Eastern Service? That is, if you, as a teenage girl, interacted with boys of the same age, were there relationships that caused problems?*

Irma: Oh, that's an unusual question. Of course there was mischief, because some people find breaking the rules exciting and worth the consequences. I don't remember anything serious.

The boys sometimes played pranks on us and of course we retaliated. This often involved a nighttime raid to put vermin in their tents or in their folded clothes, like they did to us. It was never anything serious and our leaders were quick to end such taunts with extra service. As far as relationships go, of course there were crushes and secret meetings to hold hands and talk.



*Hitler boys and BDM girls at a lake near Berchtesgaden*

I only know of one case in which a boy who had just come out of the Hitler Youth had a sexual encounter with a girl from the Berlin district while serving in the East. They were exposed and both were punished with exclusion from the groups. I don't know the circumstances, but it was frowned upon because it was immoral. The rumors were that she was sneaking out at night to meet this boy and things turned out something where they were reported and then caught in the act. That was the only time I ever heard of a girl getting in trouble. Of course, we had our arguments and petty differences that flared up when we were in our moods. But above all, it was a very polite, honest and loyal time back then.

*What else do you know about the end of the war? Have you been involved in a defense?*



*Shop window decoration with toys from the Cologne Jungmädcherring 4/53*

#### The "toy work of the HJ"

Both the young people and the young girls did a lot of handicrafts during the war. The "factory work," which culminated in the founding of the "HJ Toy Factory" in 1943, was intended to bridge the supply bottlenecks that were becoming increasingly noticeable. Because all forces were concentrated on armament, there was no longer any room for the production of toys for the Christmas gift table.

Crafting was declared a "compulsory service" by the Reich Youth Leadership in 1941/42 and played an important role in home evenings in the future. In 1943/44 alone, around 12 million toys were produced.

There were clear differences when it came to crafting: While the girls mainly made civilian toys such as shops, the "Pimpfe" made models of airplanes or ships.

Irma: Oh God, no, we weren't made into soldiers.

When the bombers flew over our area, it was exciting, disturbing and frightening. We heard on the radio about the cities that were being attacked and the dire situation in which many of them found themselves. My father became the air raid officer for our area to organize firefighting in the event that a fire went up. The flames due to the bombs dropped. Some dropped firebombs to destroy a field, ruining the crops.

Sometimes I could even hear the anti-aircraft fire in the city when it was under attack. It was a surreal sight. My BDM unit worked until almost the end, we helped with clothing collections, food collections and the like. We tried to help the people who needed help the most during the late war period. I was afraid of what might happen if we lost. I think we all knew that the war was entering its final phase in 1945. In 1943 I was supposed to leave





BDM and return to the farm for my safety but I was promoted and made temporary manager so I still helped the girls as best I could but by the end of 1944 it was all but over.

Victory was not granted to us and fate was to deal us a blow. Later in the war, all the children were moved to the countryside to avoid the bombing. We took turns with other units to look after the children. The school was closed to avoid being hit, so we spent our time helping on farms or supporting where we were needed.



*Neumühle near Greiz (Thuringia) with children from the Entsendegau brothers, on January 5, 1945 shortly before the camp was dissolved.*

The end was in April when the American soldiers came. They were a curiosity, and my mother forbade me to go outside because there were rumors of rape and assault.

At the end of April a truck came and they searched the farm for hidden soldiers. They came into my room, gave me a quick look and left.

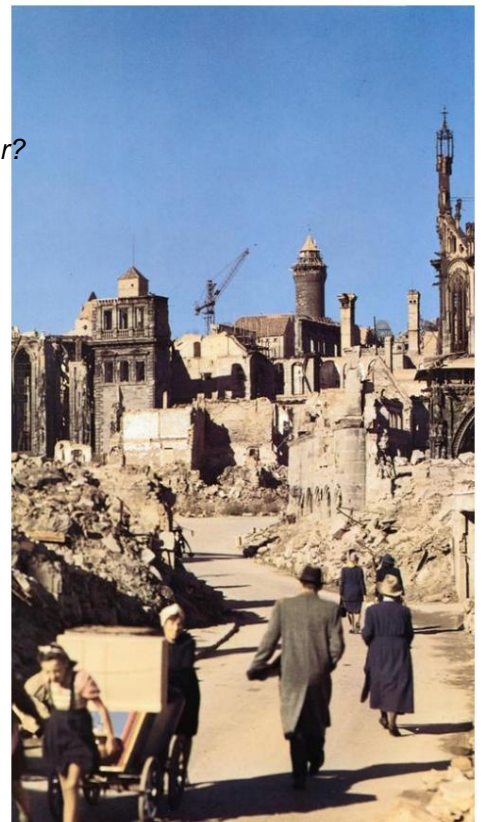
We had photos of my team at a KLV camp in both of whom were in the Wehrmacht Westmark, taken

were, one had already fallen in the east and had a black band around his photo. The soldier spoke German and asked if he had fallen. My father replied in the affirmative, to which he replied that he was sorry and wished him well. We had a good experience with the Americans, they didn't bother us and we had no reason to be hostile towards them. Eventually they parked a supply unit a few miles from us and my father quickly saw an opportunity to trade with them. So we had a great relationship. My father and mother made sure that we girls stayed away from them, but we weren't allowed to do anything stupid.

*You told me that your sister married a party officer. What happened to them after the war? And what about your other brother?*

Irma: Yes, my older sister married in 1943 and her husband was a party official in the Nuremberg office. He was drafted in 1944 and employed as an intelligence officer in the army command. At the end of the war he surrendered along with the generals, so he had it better than many others. They had an apartment in Fürth that remained intact, but my sister ended up joining us. That winter he was allowed to come home and we had a big party for him. After his release, he was arrested again for being a party official and was released after further investigation. He worked with the social side of the party, so he wasn't accused of committing a crime. He died of a heart attack in 1982 and my sister died of heart failure a few years ago. My other brother was in the infantry and, according to a letter from his commander, was killed by artillery fire that hit a bunker where he was staying. All we know is that he was in a defensive line, it was heavily attacked and he was killed instantly.

It now lies to the east in an unknown cemetery that the Reds tore down.



*Nuremberg 1945/1946*



There is now an organization working with Russia to find these ancient burial sites and move them to a place where families can visit again. I hope they'll find him eventually. He was a German soldier and should be honored as such. My other brother was also in the army and was a truck driver. He was in the heavy bridge construction supply unit.

When he came home on vacation, he would tell wild stories about the events he saw, such as a tree growing or a squirrel eating a nut. Of course he wanted to be in the middle of it all, but my parents were happy he wasn't there. He complained about the lack of fuel and supplies making his life difficult. He survived the war and was captured just after the surrender while trying to get home. The Americans brought him in for what he did in



1946: *handing out school meals at a school in Hamburg. These years were grateful because he said that the Russians were very deliberate and the Allies' food shortages were a catastrophe that was cruel. It was also the winter where many people died unnecessarily.* released to come home. We mourned our fallen brother, but were grateful that we had survived mostly unscathed. After the war, supplies were hard to come by, but people all pulled together to help.

*What do you think of the stories being told today about how evil Germany was and how bad Hitler was for Germany?*

Irma: I'm sad, to be honest, because the younger generations who are writing history now didn't live back then. I see that they are only repeating the view published by the victors of the war. After the war, many people who had left Germany because of Hitler came back to tell us how bad we had it. Both the Americans and the British brought with them busloads of former communists who almost seemed like they were ruling over us. They received special money, status and possessions. One man moved into a



Stefan Heym, born Helmut Flieg, was a Jewish German-speaking writer and briefly a member of the Bundestag from the SED's successor party, the PDS. He was also something of a post-war immigrant, even a member of the infamous Ritchie Boys. [More about him at Metapedia.](#)

stately mansion near us and kicked out the owners. They were tyrants and often used threats and coercion to get favors from women. It was a scandal of unprecedented proportions. I decided to become a teacher of young children and that was very difficult to do. All schools that were not bombed had to be closed by the Americans. Anyone who was in any way associated with the party was banned from holding any office or position of authority. I had to answer to a committee that was apparently led by former communists and camp inmates. Of course they rejected me as a Nazi.

I was able to appeal and thanks to some connections I was finally able to secure a job in 1947. I was closely watched and we were all warned that any hint of pro-Hitler sentiment would result in dismissal and prison. They were afraid that National Socialism could revive again. Some Germans had a very difficult time under the occupation. The criminals came out and formed gangs to steal and rob the many people who had fled from Stalin. The Americans had to allow the police again





it was that bad. If you were a party member and stepped on the wrong toes, this was the time when your enemies took revenge. The fate of the Jews was a big deal in the end. We had no idea what was happening to them. We knew some of them had been taken to camps, but we were told they had broken the law or were criminals. What Germany did to the Jews was not unusual for that time. I don't mean what is said about the killings. I mean that we were at war and the Jews were viewed with suspicion. At school we learned that after the first war they had great power that did not correspond to their numbers. They were a very small minority in Germany but had so much wealth; I have never met a poor Jewish person.

In fact, I only saw those who had money bragging about it. That was my impression of them; they seemed separated from us, but shouted to the heavens that they were German.

When war broke out, some of them were rounded up and sent away. All nations that were at war did so. America did it with the Japanese and the Germans, and Britain did it with the Germans too. Stalin had large areas of Germans relocated further east in order to monitor them. That was the same thing Germany did. I find it difficult to believe the stories they tell today about what happened to them in the camps. It is so evil and dark that I cannot believe that a nation as advanced as Germany would have stooped to this level. Common sense tells me that we also needed them alive to help in the war. I experienced it and saw that everyone was a valuable piece of the puzzle and there were no useless ones. Even the old and infirm had sewing groups to make warm clothes for the people and the soldiers. Farms were later converted into small businesses to build things for the war effort. I know there were factories and industries in the camps to help. Why would you destroy these resources?

Even today, Germans fervently tell the sad stories of those who call themselves survivors and demand money. I notice that their stories become darker and crazier as time goes on. There are people who are challenging them and there have been court cases to refute some of the claims, but they have power again and I can only see them getting stronger in the years to come. The Germans weren't much help, as many simply agreed with the

Allied side and acted as if they were happy to be liberated. That's what they promote today, the "Spirit of

Liberation" and we are told to accept it. The older generation is silent today and the young people only believe what the TV shows tell them. Nobody defends the past anymore.

When younger people read these sad stories, they need to understand the context in which these statements were made. The war was lost, Germany was defeated, what else could you say? To stand up and still defend Hitler was suicide. Some did so safely and quickly met their fate at the end of a rope, a knife or a bullet. I was told that all the photos and films from the camps showing the dead and emaciated inmates represent the effects of disease. This happened in the camps due to Allied bombing raids, which destroyed life support facilities. There were no intentional killings or abuse, but I have to be careful saying that today. We were lucky enough to live on a farm that had its own water and firewood.

